



MRBackup Professional

Authors: MR Software

Originally a commercial product, MRBackup was recently released on a shareware basis, giving all of us an excellent opportunity to sample this professional software free of charge.

Those who wish to carry on using MRBackup Professional will find details in the on-disk documentation of the company's offer of a manual in exchange for a small shareware registration fee.

The program works by scanning a hard drive for all files, offering the user a list of those available for backup, then safely builds a copy of the selected files and directories on a number of floppies. In this way, the user can ensure his or her data is safe from unexpected disasters, a vital if much overlooked practice for all HD owners.

As the program is originally supplied on a disk of its own, we've archived the lot in our usual fashion and you'll have to unpack the archive first. Once this process is complete, boot from your hard drive and insert MRBackup in a drive, open the disk window and double click on the MRBackup icon.

A window will appear with a variety of options and buttons on offer. First, a string gadgets tell the program where its preferences are saved, which by default is on the MRBackup disk and shouldn't be changed. Next there is the home path, which simply tells MRBackup which hard drive to look at first and shouldn't need to be fiddled with as yet. Finally, the backup path is selectable using the third gadget.

This is DFD, for the moment, indicating that MRBackup will use the internal floppy drive to write backups and look for restored data. This can be changed to another drive if you like by clicking on the question mark button. A file requester will appear, using which you can choose to write data to a different floppy drive.

If a second floppy is attached to your Amiga's external drive port, MRBackup will automatically detect this and use it, so there's really no need to change this setting either. Below the string gadgets, four floppy disk icons represent which drives might potentially be available, and those which are not will be ghosted out.

On the right of the string gadgets, several other options are presented, the first of which is a frivolous voice button which, if set to on, will force MRBackup to report all system responses via the Workbench narrator device. Below this is an important button which governs the type of backup media used.

Clicking on this toggles through three settings - AmigaDOS, Fast Disk, and SCSI tape. The first will save all data to normal Amiga disks as normal Amiga files and is rather slow, though it does have the advantage of being ultra safe (paranoid hard drive users take note). The second is the default Fast Disk setting which MRBackup uses for most backups. Fast Disk uses any 3.5in floppy and formats it as the data is written to the disk, automatically splitting large files across two or more disks to use all available disk space.

The resulting backup disks will only be recognised by MRBackup (so make sure you have a backup of MRBackup somewhere safe!), but has the advantage of being secure, and much faster than the AmigaDOS method.

A third option is available for those with access to SCSI tape streamer devices, the

PSC_Mount icon to your WBStartup drawer if you have Workbench 2.04 or higher.

All done? Takes a little while, doesn't it? The Publisher is a complex package capable of superb professional results, and the price of this productive power is a certain amount of tinkering, to ensure the system is set up properly. Now to use the program...

We have provided a complete step-by-step tutorial on creating a flyer using the program which you will find elsewhere in this issue, so on these pages we will review the various menus and options, looking at how they work and why.

The first step is to load the program, at which point you will notice it runs in hi-res interlaced. This screen setting cannot be changed and has been forced upon the program because it is the best display mode for detailed DTP work. If you don't

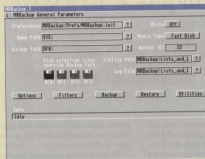
have a hi-res monitor and flicker fixer, or can't run in the newer Productivity mode, flicker can be reduced to acceptable levels by experimenting with contrast and brightness controls on the monitor or TV.

All documents in The Publisher start with the addition of a page. All you'll see at the present is the menu bar and a tool box on the left of the screen. Everything else is blank, so choose Add from the Page menu and a requester will appear with the set-up information for our new page.

Our default settings are in centimetres and an A4 page size, so click on OK to create the page. Now we'll take a whizz through the various options and gadgets.

First stop is the all-important cluster of four icons at the top of the tool box. These represent the four modes we can be in while using the program. Clockwise they are cursor, paragraph, text, and drawing modes, and you have to be in the correct mode to carry out certain operations.

Let's start by creating a box. Click on



The main screen, from where backup and restoration options are accessed

most efficient and speedy backup method but also one which the vast majority of us will not use.

Tape streamers are huge digital tape devices capable of storing the contents of an entire HD on one tape, but they are usually only found attached to network servers in office settings.

To round off the buttons on the main screen, a row of five gadgets can be used to access the various sections of the program. Options opens a screen on which the user can set the date for the backup, the prefix for backup disks, such as "MyPicoles", and a variety of preference settings controlling how backups and restores are carried out.

This would be a good time to hit the help key to summon MRBackup's excellent on-line help. Using the Browse, Contents, and Restore buttons we can move through a variety of information screens where tips and information of all kinds are stored.

Use the on-line help for any option on which you are unsure, but there are three buttons we need to take a closer look at. Two of these, marked Compression and Decompression, tell the program what type of crunching to use on the data being backed up and range from none to 16-bit. The higher the compression goes the fewer floppies are needed, but backup times increase dramatically.

Third and most important is the button in the lower right-hand corner labelled Verify Writes. By default this is set to "no", which means data saved to a floppy during a backup is not tested for errors, but we would recommend this is always set to "yes".

Backups will take half as long again when verification is turned on, but if dodgy old disks are used the user can end up attempting to restore the data that disk four in a set of 23 is corrupt, which means the data on all subsequent disks cannot be accessed, a nightmare we could all do without.

Now click on OK to take us back to the main screen and click on the Filters button. Filters have to be written using a text editor such as ED, but can be very useful in